

The Mary J. Platt Industrial School as Seen by an Outsider*

Belva Macklem

IF the girls will keep still long enough, I'll tell you about the industrial school. The institution was organized in 1906. It was then conducted in little cottages, and not until 1910 did it boast of a building all its own, the present home of the school.

Three of us teachers started last Saturday afternoon to find it. We had been told to follow 7th street until we came to the place, and that we couldn't miss it. We walked and walked, and then went some more; finally we covered all the pavement of 7th, and began on the trail which led into the desert. After doing about half a mile through sage-brush and sand, we came to a pretty green yard with trees, among which stood a large, square, two-story stucco house. The lawn in front was well-shaded and green, an unusual sight here. There was English ivy over one end of the porch, and a large bed of flowers at the side of the steps. On either side of the glass door hung swings, and under one was stretched a big, fat,

*This letter, written to her mother by a teacher in Tucson, gives such a good picture of our Tucson school that we gladly present the view from the standpoint of an "outsider."—Ed.

brown spaniel. But for the inscription over the door we would have thought the place belonged to a wealthy ranchman, because it looked so well-kept and comfortable. But the inscription read, "Mary J. Platt Industrial School."

We were invited into the office, where we waited for the superintendent. In the adjoining parlor a little Mexican girl was laboriously pounding out her C scale for her music teacher, bobbing her black head with every thump of her fingers. Soon the superintendent and a teacher came, and we were shown through the building and about the grounds.

There were two school rooms in which the formal, academic school work is done; they resembled ordinary school rooms, except that there was a piano, and pretty curtains were at the windows. There were flowers and plants all about the rooms, too. In the dining-room were five long white tables, on which the silver and napkins were placed ready for the next meal. The kitchen looked like any other well-kept, clean kitchen. On a table near the range we saw a great many loaves of the best-looking bread. I longed for a slice, but nobody thought to offer me any.

The pantry came next, with its shelves of cans and boxes. From there we descended to the large laundry, in which were eight or ten tubs, with as many adjustable ironing-boards about the walls. In one corner lay a pile of clothes sorted for the early Monday morning stunt. The girls do all the laundry work, as well as the cooking, preparing of meals, and the rest of the housework. They have a month at a time of a certain kind of work. A little twelve-year-old girl made the bread we saw in

the kitchen but I think the teacher of cooking helped her mix it.

Upstairs we saw the little white cots, all straight and clean. They were in two large dormitories in which were many big, wide-open windows. In the sewing-room, the teacher of sewing told us about her work, and how interested the little Spanish girls are in making Christmas gifts for their families back home.

About this time I began to wonder where the children were, for I had seen only one or two about the house. When I asked about them the ladies laughed and said they would show us the most interesting part of the school at once. They led us out on a balcony which overlooked the back yard. And such a back yard! It was a joy to see it. In the center was a good-sized baseball diamond, at one end were a lot of sheds, and along the fence were play-houses. A wood-pile of huge dimensions occupied one corner, screened by a large grape arbor and over the whole swarmed forty girls, laughing and romping and having the time of their lives. A hotly contested baseball game was in full swing upon the diamond. The biggest girl, as usual, was the pitcher, and they batted, as usual, with the side of a board. Little girls were having tea-parties in the play-houses, and swinging in rope swings. One whose work was to get the fuel for the supper fire was having a dreadful time picking up sticks and keeping track of the ball at the same time. All in all, it was the happiest bunch of youngsters that I've seen in a very long while.

Some of these girls were from Old Mexico, some from New Mexico, and others from Arizona. After they have been here a year they almost always come back until they graduate,

and often bring with them four or five others who want to enter.

The girls who can afford it pay a tuition fee of eight dollars a month. Others pay a dollar, which partly covers the cost of their Sunday uniform, and there are a few who cannot pay anything at all. The girls attend the English church every Sunday morning, and are expected to speak English at all times, even in their play.

You can't appreciate the work this school is doing for its girls unless you have seen the awful, squalid, degrading places which house the majority of the Mexican children. These girls have a different look in their faces, and a light in their eyes other than the dull, ignorant expression so common to the Mexican child. But the school can accommodate less than fifty, and every year many who hope to get into this wonderful place have to be turned away.

When we left that back balcony, where we had witnessed several innings of one of the most exciting ball games I have ever seen, the girls all waved good-bye. Then as I turned to enter the house I heard Manuela shout, "Mary Louisa, you right away cut that out. You batted no fair ball, you're out, and my turn it is now!"

Woman's Home Missionary Society
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